

Re'eh

ראה
“See”

Deuteronomy 11:26 – 16:17

Torah Together



In this *Torah* portion, Moses continues to exhort the Israelites to love God and to be obedient to His commands. He then repeats God's commands concerning clean and unclean foods, tithes, and special times. He also makes very clear God's view on the worship of other gods.

1. Love and Obey YHWH - 11:26-32

a) What is the effect of obedience or disobedience to God's *Torah*? Is obedience necessary to earn God's love? Does obedience guarantee salvation?

Obedience to Torah yields God's blessings, whereas disobedience leads to a curse. God's love is not conditional upon obedience and obedience does not guarantee salvation. (Salvation is through Yeshua.)

b) Where were the blessings for obedience and the curses for disobedience to be proclaimed? Can you locate these places on a map of Israel?

The blessings from obedience were to be proclaimed on Mount Gerazim and the curses on Mount Ebal. These mountains are west of Jericho near Shechem (today's Nablus). They are in what's known today as the "west bank" but there is a Jewish settlement on Mount Gerizim.

2. The One Place of Worship - 12:1-32

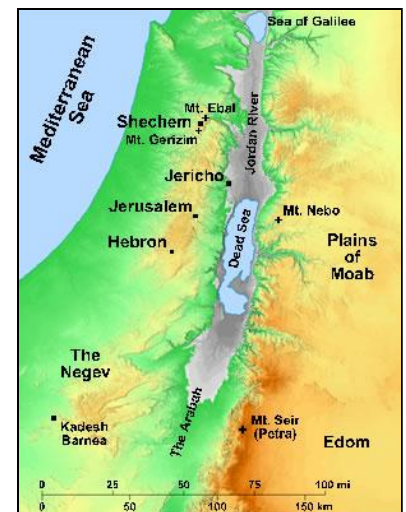
a) What was to be done with the Canaanite places of worship when the Israelites entered the land? What about idols, altars, and other items of worship? According to verse 4, could the Israelites adapt any of the Canaanite worship practices?

All Canaanite places of worship were to be totally destroyed along with their idols, altars, and other items of worship. The names of their gods were to be wiped out. The Israelites were not to adopt any of the Canaanite worship practices.

b) The Canaanites worshiped their gods in many locations (usually on high hills or under trees). How was the Israelites' worship of YHWH to be different?

In contrast to Canaanite worship practices, God told the Israelites that He himself would choose a specific place where He would dwell and the Israelites would worship Him there. (That place would be Jerusalem.)

Notice that obedience or disobedience to the *Torah* is not about earning God's love or salvation. God already loves us (**John 3:16**), but by keeping the *Torah*, we can receive a blessing.



Scripture Link:

Joshua 8:30-35

describes the fulfillment of this command when the Israelites entered the Promised Land.

The God of the Israelites was distinctly different than the gods of the Canaanites and those people who worship Him would do it in a distinctly different way.

c) After the Israelites occupied the land, where were they allowed to sacrifice animals for worship to YHWH? Where were they allowed to slaughter animals for food? What was to be done with the animal's blood in either case? What about other food?

After the Israelites settled the land and God chose the place where He would dwell and be worshiped, then the Israelites were only to offer sacrifices at this one location. They were not to offer sacrifices at other locations. (Perhaps this would help ensure only one true form of worship. It would certainly tie the worship of YHWH to the land of Israel.) Animals for food could be slaughtered wherever desired but these were not to be considered sacrifices to God. In any case, blood was never to be eaten but spilled out on the ground.

3. Worshipping Other Gods - 13:1-18

a) What was to be done with a prophet who sought to lead the people to worship other gods? Why would God allow such a thing to happen? Do you think this is fair?

The false prophet was to be put to death (verse 5). This was God's way of testing the Israelites to see if they would "love him with all their hearts." Above all else, God insists on the worship of Him and Him alone.

b) What was to be done if a close relative tried to entice someone to worship other gods? Why do you think God commanded this punishment?

Even a close relative was to be stoned if he or she tried to entice others to worship other gods. In this way, the evil would be purged from among them (verse 5) and no one would do such an evil thing again (verse 11).

c) What was to be done when an entire town was found to be worshipping other gods? Why do you think God was so concerned with the worship of other gods?

If an entire town had begun to worship other gods, then everyone in the town was to be put to death and the entire town was to be destroyed (burned) as a burnt offering to YHWH. God knows how the worship of other gods leads to all kinds of evil and He finds it detestable.

4. Clean and Unclean Food - 14:1-21

a) What do you think is behind God's command to not cut oneself or shave one's head for the dead (verse 1)? How might this tie in with the previous passage?

The cutting of one's body was a practice in the worship of certain pagan gods, e.g., Baal worship, as was also the shaving of one's head as a sign of mourning. God was again warning against the worship of other gods.

Based on the harsh punishments for enticing the Israelites to worship other gods, it seems clear that God takes an extremely negative view of this practice. Based on your understanding of the subsequent history of Israel, does this seem like an appropriate viewpoint for God?

Scripture Link:

God's rules for which animals were appropriate for food and which were not are found in **Leviticus 11**.

b) This is a review of the laws of *kashrut*, that is, which animals were acceptable as food. What was the general rule about large animals? Why weren't the camel or the pig acceptable?

Large (domesticated) animals were acceptable as food if they had split hooves and ruminated (chewed the cud). Camels are ruminants but do not have split hooves. Swine have split hooves but do not ruminate.

c) What was the general rule about seafood? What do you think constituted a "clean bird" (verse 11)? Was an animal found dead acceptable as food? What do you think is meant by the command not to cook a kid in its mother's milk (verse 21)?

For fish or seafood to be acceptable as food, the animal must have both fins and scales. (This would disqualify shrimp, clams, lobster, shark, & catfish.) Clean birds feed primarily off grain whereas unclean birds are birds of prey and feed off carrion. An animal found dead was not acceptable as food. It is believed that the prohibition of cooking a kid in its mother's milk may have referred to yet another pagan worship practice. This prohibition led to the Jewish custom of not eating meat and dairy products together.

5. Tithes - 14:22-29

a) What was to be done with a person's tithe? Where was this to be done? What was to be done if the person lived far away? Does this seem like a good way to celebrate God's blessings for the year?

The tithe was to be offered to YHWH and eaten in the presence of YHWH at the place He would choose to dwell (Jerusalem). If the distance a person lived from that place (Jerusalem) was too far, then he was to sell his tithe, take the money to Jerusalem, and buy whatever he chose to celebrate before God. It seems like a God-ordained reason to celebrate God's blessings.

b) What was to be done for the Levites who lived in cities and towns other than the one which YHWH chose for himself? Who else was to share in this?

Every third year, the tithe was to be brought to the outlying cities and towns where it was given to the Levites who ministered there. It was also to be used for the aliens, the widows, and the orphans in the towns.

6. The Year for Canceling Debts - 15:1-11

a) What was to be done at the end of every seven years? Did this apply equally to Israelites and to non-Israelites?

At the end of every seven years (sh'mittah), all debts between Israelites were to be cancelled. Debts with foreigners remained.

When God's rules for clean and unclean food were originally given, they were simply commands – you were blessed for keeping them and were cursed if you did not keep them. However, with today's understanding of health and hygiene, many of these rules seem to make very good sense to avoid some of the diseases that affected other groups throughout history.

Scripture Link: Leviticus 27:30-32

addresses the tithe (10 percent) of a person's crops, animals or wages. In general, each year a person was to take his tithe to Jerusalem and present it before God as a sacrifice. This passage talks about the exceptions to that rule.

God makes it clear that we have an obligation to the poor among us. Do you think His promise to “bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to” (verse 10) is still valid today?

Scripture Link:
Exodus 21 records God’s commands concerning the treatment of Hebrew slaves. Note that a servant who chose to remain with his master after six years of servitude was known as a “bondservant.” Believers in *Yeshua* are known as “bondservants of the Messiah.”

b) In verse 4, Moses said that there should be no poor Israelites among them. What did the Israelites need to do to assure this? What was to be their status as a nation?

God said he would bless them “richly” if they would fully obey Him and follow His commandments. God promised that the Israelites would lend to many nations but borrow from none and would rule over many nations.

c) What did God command that the Israelites do with the poor and needy in the land? What benefit would a person receive for doing this? Do you think this applies to us?

God commanded that the people be “openhanded” to the poor and needy (vs 11). God would then bless that person’s work. This principle is still at work.

7. Freeing Servants - 15:12-18

a) What was to be done with Hebrew slaves after six years of servitude? When this was done, what was to be the attitude and actions of the slave owner?

Hebrew slaves were to be freed in the 7th year of servitude (see Exodus 21). The owner was to be generous to his slave, sending him away with goods to start his own life.

b) What was done if a servant wanted to remain with his master? Why might a servant want to do this?

If a servant wanted to remain with his master, then the servant’s ear was pierced as a sign of permanent servitude. This might occur if a slave was loved by his master and felt like a part of his family.

8. The Firstborn Animals - 15:19-23

What was to be done with the firstborn of a person’s livestock? When was a person not required to do this?

The firstborn of a person’s livestock belonged to God and was to be sacrificed to Him and eaten in His presence. This was not required if the firstborn was defective in any way.

9. Passover, Feast of Weeks, and Feast of Tabernacles - 16:1-17

a) When and where was *Pesach* to be celebrated? What was the primary purpose of this celebration? What exactly was to be done? How long did this holiday last? Why was the unleavened bread called the “bread of affliction”?

***Pesach* (Passover) was to be celebrated in Aviv, (later called Nisan) the first month of the year, March or April on the Roman calendar. It was to be celebrated in the “place YHWH will choose”, i.e., Jerusalem. The purpose of *Pesach* is to commemorate the Israelites’ exodus from Egypt. The *Pesach* lamb was sacrificed on the evening of the 14th. The following seven days are known as the Feast of Unleavened bread, commemorating the fact that the Hebrews made bread without yeast as they awaited their exodus from Egypt.**

b) When and where was *Shavuot* to be celebrated? What was the primary purpose of this celebration? What exactly was to be done? What was given to YHWH for this celebration?

Shavuot (Feast of Weeks) was celebrated seven weeks plus one day after Passover. It, too, was to be celebrated “in the place YHWH will choose”, Jerusalem. Its primary purpose was to celebrate the first fruits of the harvest. It was a time of rejoicing and people were to give a freewill offering to God in proportion to the blessings they had received.

c) Where was *Sukkot* to be celebrated? What was the primary purpose of this celebration? How long did this holiday last?

Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles) was celebrated seven days after the harvest. (Leviticus 23:34 sets this on the 15th of Tishri, the 7th month.) This also was to be celebrated in Jerusalem. This is a seven day celebration of the harvest, a time of rejoicing.

d) How many times during the year were the men of Israel to “appear before YHWH at the place He will choose”? What were they to bring?

Three times a year all the men of Israel were to come to Jerusalem for these celebrations. Each was to bring a gift in proportion to the blessings he had received.

Scripture Link:

God’s appointed times (holidays) are defined in **Leviticus 23** as well as other places in the *Torah*. These appointed times served both to help the Israelites remember past events in their lives as well as to rehearse for coming events in God’s plan for mankind.

“See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse”
Deuteronomy 11:26

Digging deeper

Scripture Link:

II Samuel 7 records the story of God's message to Nathan the prophet concerning the "place God would choose to put his Name."

1. Many times in this *parashah*, Moses refers to "the place YHWH will choose for Himself." What place is this? What reasons do you think God may have had for choosing a specific place "to put His Name there for his dwelling" (Deuteronomy 12:4)? What do you think about the fact that Moses' words were recorded 400 – 500 years before King David lived and that even today this city is of world importance?

The place God chose for Himself, to dwell among His people, was Jerusalem. By associating Himself with this specific place, He tied Himself to the Hebrew people and to the land of Israel. Obviously this is important to God. Although He is the God of the Universe, He also has chosen the Israelite people specifically as His own and has chosen to live among them. It's nothing short of miraculous that some 3500 years after these words were written, Jerusalem remains the controversial "place of His choosing." If God never changes, then this place is still His and He will again dwell there.

2. Why do you think it was so important to God that the worship of other gods not be included with the Israelite worship of Him? Do you think this still applies to us today? In what ways does this occur today?

God tells us in the second commandment that He is a jealous God. All other or lesser gods are of His creation and it takes away from His glory if we worship them. Furthermore, the worship of other gods typically includes rites and practices that violate God's laws. They often lead to outright sin and the neglect of service to God. This happens even today when we put other things ahead of God on our priority list.

For further study, see

Haftarah : Isaiah 44:11 – 45:5

Brit Hadashah : I Corinthians 5:9-13; I John 4:1-6